

REMARKS

The following is in response to the Office Action mailed October 22, 2003.

Applicant has amended claims 1, 6, 13 and 19.

Regarding claim 6, the Examiner states that the phrase "or other goods of value" renders the claim indefinite because the claim includes elements not actually disclosed (those encompassed by "or other goods of value"), thereby rendering the scope of the claim unascertainable.

Claim 6 has been amended accordingly.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 5-12, 14 and 18-20 as being anticipated by Acres et al. USPN 5,876,284.

The overly-broad claimed invention is clearly disclosed by Acres et al. For instance, Acres et al. discloses a plurality of linked game machines, see figure 1. The game machines shown in figure 1 are linked to an interactive sign, see col. 19, lines 30-39 where Acres et al. discloses a hanging storm cloud simulation. Col. 19, lines 30-39 state "Preferably, the storm simulator comprises one or more panels having clouds depicted thereon which is suspended from a ceiling in the casino. A plurality of lights provide indirect lighting of the clouds for simulating lightning. A sound source, preferably a computer having a commercially available sound card installed therein, is connected to a conventional amplifier which produces the sound of thunder when played through concealed speakers. The activation of the interactive sign is the generation of the bonus event which

is disclosed by Acres et al., see section G in the reference which spans columns 19-20. Re. claim 8, see col. 20:49-60.

Section G relates to multiple jackpot bonus. Figure 35 shows a relay module 254 connected to network 10 via cable 30. Relay module 254 includes four relays each of which closes in response to a command issued by one of the floor controllers, like floor controllers 18, 28 in system 10. The relay contacts, in turn, are connected to a storm simulator.

The four relays, in module 254, when closed in sequence, cause storm simulator 257 to provide visual and audible effects, in the form of simulated lightning and thunder, which progressively increase in intensity the relays close in sequence.

When a first or attract relay closes, simulator 257 provides low intensity thunder without lightning. When a second or low intensity relay closes, simulator 257 provides the low intensity thunder along with low intensity lightning effects. When a third relay closes, simulator 257 provides medium intensity thunder and lightning effects and when the fourth or high intensity relay closes, high intensity thunder and lightning effects are generated by the simulator.

During operation of the multiple jackpot bonus of the preferred embodiment, the first or attract relay closes at random intervals within preselected minimum and maximum periods. During this time, gaming devices on the network which are selected to make up the multiple jackpot bonus

operate in a non-bonus mode, i.e., jackpots pay in accordance with a table incorporated into the gaming device. When the second or low intensity relay closes, all machines which are designated to participate in a multiple jackpot bonus pay jackpots which are increased by a multiple equal to a first or low intensity multiplier, which is selected by the casino in the software which controls the multiple jackpot bonus. When the third or medium intensity relay is closed, jackpots are multiplied by a medium intensity multiplier which is typically of a higher value than the low intensity multiplier. Finally, when all relays are closed, jackpots are multiplied by a high intensity multiplier, also preselected by the casino and typically of a higher value than the medium intensity multiplier.

The low, medium and high intensity levels each last for a predetermined period of time which can be selected for each level by the casino. A low intensity bonus period includes only the low intensity multiplier and related storm effects. A medium intensity bonus period includes both the low intensity multiplier and related effects followed immediately by the medium intensity multiplier and related effects. A high intensity bonus period includes all three intensity multipliers and related effects in sequence from low to high intensity. The bonus period occurs at random intervals and has intensities which also occur randomly.

The random nature of the timing of the bonus periods as well as the intensity level of each bonus period prevents players from attempting to forecast the occurrence of the next bonus period or of the next occurring bonus period of a particular intensity level. This feature prevents players from timing their play,

i.e., not playing during time periods in which the player believes there is little likelihood of a bonus period or of a bonus period of a particular intensity occurring.

Col. 20 lines 49-60 states that a partial list of the promotions according to the invention include, but are not limited to: a multiple jackpot wherein the gaming device reconfigures its payout to be a multiple of its default payout schedule; a bonus jackpot wherein the gaming device reconfigures its payout schedule to payout an additional bonus amount when certain conditions are met; and a progressive jackpot wherein two or more gaming devices are combined in a progressive jackpot having a progressive jackpot payout schedule. In addition to these, many other promotions are possible by the above-described system for controlling and monitoring a plurality of gaming devices.

Acres describes that when the gaming machines are operated in a bonus mode, there should be a way to notify the players, first, that the bonus mode is imminent to encourage additional play when the bonus becomes effective. Secondly, the players must be notified when the bonus mode is in effect. Further, because casinos are always eager to provide customers with new gaming experiences, it would be desirable to provide such modification with audio and visual effects which entertained and stimulated the players and which progressively increased in intensity in proportion to the value of the bonus.

Acres describes a gaming system which alerts a user when a gaming system is in a bonusing mode by providing the user with audio and visual effects

in the form of a cloud. Based on the intensity of the thunder and lightning is the size of the bonus. The user does not play the bonusing event on the cloud.

Amended claims 1 and 19 and those claims dependent on them require that the bonusing event be played on the interactive sign. Therefore claims 1, 2, 5-12, 14 and 18-20 are not anticipated nor obvious over Acres.

The Examiner has rejected claims 3 and 4 as being obvious over Acres et al. USPN 5,876,284.

Acres et al. teaches in column 20, lines 49-60 having the bonus based on certain conditions being met. One of ordinary skill understands that it is quite common as a condition for achieve a certain value of bonus a player must insert a number of additional coins into the machine. For example, in a progressive bonus scheme, the player inserts an extra coin into the machine to become a part of the progressive play. A percentage of that extra coin goes into the progressive bonus pool and if the player achieves a condition that is predetermined, the player wins a percentage of the total progressive bonus pool's value. Likewise, the same can be stated with a plurality of game machines linked together to form a progressive jackpot system and network. Therefore, one skilled in the art deems basing the bonus on the number or amount of coins inserted into one or a plurality of linked game machines as obvious.

Claim 3 relates to the system of claim 1 wherein a player reaches the bonusing event based on the number of coins placed in a specific gaming machine. Claim 4 relates to the system of claim 1 wherein a player reaches the

bonusing event based on the number of coins entered in all linked gaming machines.

For the reasons stated above, claims 3 and 4 are not obvious over Acres.

The Examiner has rejected claims 15-17 as being obvious over Acres et al., USPN 5,876,284 in view of Adams USPN 5,848,932.

Acres et al. lacks in disclosing its interactive sign being a "wheel of fortune". Instead, Acres decided to utilize a storm simulation as a means of enticing players to play the game machines linked together. In an analogous device, Adams in figure 4 and column 8 suggests the usage of a "wheel of fortune" as the bonus scheme to entice players to participate in the game. One skilled in the art understands the need to develop ways of enticing players to participate in a casino's game hall or the like. The lack of player participation leads to a lack of revenue for the casino. The opposite is true. Therefore, one would be motivated to find alternative ways to entice player participation; in order to avoid player boredom with the same storm simulation. Adams demonstrates an alternative enticement. Therefore, it would be obvious to apply the suggestions in Adams as an alternative to what is disclosed in Acres in order to avoid player boredom and thus lack of participation.

Adams relates to gaming devices comprising a standard gaming unit, e.g., three reels, and a discernible additional payout indicator, e.g. a rotatable wheel. A preferred bonus payout indicator is clearly visible by the player and is actuatable when the reels of the slot machine stop on certain predetermined

indicia. The secondary game is separate from the primary game either physically or temporally.

According to the most preferred embodiments, a bonus payout indicator is clearly visible to a player and is operable when primary reels of a primary game slot machine stop on certain predetermined indicia. According to one preferred embodiment, a secondary payout indicator is in the form of a rotatable bonus wheel which can be caused to spin automatically or in response to some action by a player, e.g., the player pushing a button, when the primary game indicates one of a predetermined plurality of indicia. The wheel is caused to gradually reduce speed and when the wheel stops, a pointer indicates the payout to be awarded to the player. Other embodiments of the invention comprise gaming devices having electronic means for displaying indicia of rotatable reels such as a video screen and/or means for displaying indicia of a secondary payout indicator, such as a video screen. The video display can show a wheel of the type used in a roulette game.

Regarding claims 16 and 17, the Examiner states that the limitations herein are further alternatives to what is claimed as a limitation in claim 15. As stated above, those of skill in the art seek alternative ways to keep player interest and thus player participation on the rise. Therefore, these limitations are obvious design choices left to the inventor's discretion; wherein said discretion can be predicated on marketing analysis and factors utilized in casino management operations in order to make the casino maximize its profits.

Claim 15 relates to the system of claim 1 wherein the bonusing event is a wheel which has various monetary denominations around it. Claim 16 relates to the system of claim 1 wherein the bonusing event is an LCD Screen where a player plays one on one with a casino dealer on the screen. Claim 17 relates to the gaming system of claim 1 wherein the bonusing event is a ferris wheel that unloads coins when one of the linked gaming machines triggers the bonusing event.

For the reasons stated above, claims 15-17 are not obvious over Acres in view of Adams.

Applicant had a teleconference with the Examiner who stated that claim 13 of the patent application is allowable. Further, the Examiner stated that if applicant limited the claims to the interactive screen containing the secondary game which is played, applicant would avoid the prior art of record.

Applicant believes the application is now in condition for allowance.

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